



# CITY OF CONCORD

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

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### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

#### Minutes

October 2, 2009

7:30 A.M.

The meeting convened at Concord Litho, 92 Old Turnpike Road, Concord. Coffee and refreshments were served compliments of Peter Cook.

Chairperson Carley called the meeting to order at 7:40 A.M.

**PRESENT:** Allen Bennett, Tim Bernier, Doug Black, Christopher Carley, Maura Carroll, Byron Champlin, Mark Coen, Peter Cook, Jan McClure, Bill Norton, Dan St. Hilaire, Claudia Walker, and Stephen Heavener

**ABSENT:** Larry Gloekler and John Hoyt

**STAFF:** Matt Walsh, Asst. for Special Projects  
Bev Rafferty, Administrative Assistant

**GUESTS:** Patricia Immen, Library Director  
Mary Beth Robinson, Library Trustee and member of the Task Force for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library

Chairperson Carley welcomed guests Ms. Immen and Ms. Robinson to the meeting. Ms. Immen noted that Dr. Douglas Black, Maura Carroll, Jan McClure, and Mark Coen (all members of EDAC) also serve on the Library Task Force.

#### **I. MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2009 EDAC MEETING**

Chairperson Carley noted that one item regarding driveway widths was not officially voted on at last month's meeting so that will be discussed at the November meeting.

Tim Bernier made a motion to approve the minutes as written; seconded by Allen Bennett; the motion passed unanimously.

#### **II. LIBRARY TASK FORCE UPDATE**

Chairperson Carley turned the meeting over to Jan McClure of the Library Task Force. Ms. McClure thanked EDAC for taking time to put the regulations ordinance review on hold so the Task Force could make its presentation today.

Ms. McClure presented a brief slide show and noted that the Task Force is looking for feedback and solicitation of opinions about the task force's work thus far. They are preparing to report to the City Council in November or December 2009.

Ms. McClure gave a brief history of the Task Force. The Task Force was established by the Mayor last year and they met for the first time in January 2009.

The City Council assigned three tasks: site selection, estimate operating costs, and fundraising feasibility analysis. The backdrop of the Needs Assessment completed in 2007 concluded that it was time for Concord to make a new investment in what should be a vibrant community asset. This Assessment was accepted by the City Council in November 2007.

The Needs Assessment Study found the following: the current Library is not laid out well, there is a lack of parking, 30% of the Library's total collection is in storage due to lack of display space, and 50% of the adult collection is in storage. Only 57% of the Library (or 19,000SF of the total 34,725 SF) is usable space (space used by patrons vs. storage and hallways, etc.). The Needs Assessment estimated the cost to renovate and expand vs. building a new facility. Expansion would require extensive interior renovations and the 1965 addition on the rear of the building would need to be demolished. The cost of renovation was the same as building a new facility.

The Needs Assessment study recommended a new Library in a downtown location so the Task Force took off from this recommendation and reviewed 22 potential sites in the larger downtown area. The Task Force reviewed sites from Bouton to Perley and the Everett Arena to the State Hospital grounds. The assumption was it should be a downtown location.

A site selection study matrix was created and 46 separate criterion in 6 individual categories was used. The criteria included lot size, cost of acquisition, anticipated difficulty of construction, impacts on historic buildings, availability of on- and off-street parking, and opportunity for long term expansion.

The 22 sites were a mix of public and privately owned properties and included the Walker School, State Hospital, a collection of storefronts along Main Street, the old NH Public Radio site, and the Sanel site. Some of the sites did not score high enough on the criteria due to a variety of factors including inadequate lot size, poor access, lack of on site parking opportunities, and others.

The Task Force's second choice was the NH Employment Security property. It has a Main Street presence, there is ample parking, and it is currently tax exempt. The drawbacks are the Department of Employment Security would have to be relocated and it is on the short list for the Merrimack County Courthouse. Therefore, the Storrs Street site is the Task Force's first choice.

The Storrs Street site is ideal. It is in the heart of downtown, has 3/4 of an acre and there is space for parking, frontage on 4 streets (Storrs, Pleasant Street Extension, Depot, and Kennedy Lane), the owners were previously willing to sell and the property would remain on the tax rolls until the city buys it. The cost is also cheaper than some of the other sites - \$ 2.14 million.

Ms. McClure showed a slide of a conceptual rendering and she emphasized it was just a conceptual drawing. The building would be 40,000 sq. ft. where the current building is 34,725 sq. ft. There would be a 40 space parking lot, entrances from the parking lot and Storrs Street which would make the building available for "after hours" groups/meetings. The Task Force did reach out to a number of organizations to see if they would help and there is a lot of interest in having a new Library.

Ms. McClure discussed the economic development benefits which would likely accrue if the Storrs Street site was developed as a Library. Specifically, there is potential to stimulate redevelopment in the area, particularly for vacant buildings surrounding the property on Depot Street, Main Street, and Kennedy Lane. These properties have potential for redevelopment of vacant upper floors, and entrances and exits on Main Street. This site has the strongest economic development effect of all those considered. There are 22 restaurants/coffee shops within the area. Beyond serving as a potential catalyst for redevelopment, research indicates that the project will also recreate a multiplier effect for spending by downtown patrons. Specifically, a study of the new Seattle, WA public library indicated on average each patron to that Library spends \$16 elsewhere in downtown Seattle as part of its visit.

Concord is not alone in viewing its Library as a community asset. Several communities in NH have made investments in their libraries in recent years. Some members of the Task Force visited the Portsmouth Library recently and found some features Concord would want to put in a new library here.

The total project cost for the Portsmouth Library was \$9.6 million of which \$7.8 was construction cost (no property acquisition was required). Their building is a "green" building and is LEED certified. One thing the members liked was the open concept in the lobby. It creates an airy feel and allows staff to multi-task and supervise the wider area. There is also a café. You can buy coffee here and bring a sandwich from a local deli and meet friends for lunch.

The Portsmouth Library also has a courtyard and community garden. These and other features were funded by \$100,000 gifts and this is another task the Task Force must address.

Peter Cook noted the downtown location is critical and asked how much of the new Library would be devoted to materials versus meeting space. Mark Coen noted the Portsmouth Library has 100% of its collection displayed. This shows

that the library is moving from the depositing of books to a community nexus. Mr. Coen also noted that foot traffic is up dramatically as people have access to computers and, therefore, are going to libraries to do research.

Dan St. Hilaire thinks the café is a tremendous idea and if the meeting space is more than Portsmouth has, how can the proposed new building be about the same size as the old one? A lot of the current building space is basement area and is used for storage. Of 34,725 sq. ft. only 19,800 is useable (approximately 57%). If the new building is 40,000 sq. ft. and 80% is going to be useable space, that accounts for 32,000 sq. ft. useable space almost double what Concord currently has.

Byron Champlin commented that downtown is absolutely the right thing to do; it's an excellent reuse of the underutilized space and in the design phase you can design it so it can be expanded in the future.

Mr. Champlin also noted that asphalt parking is wasted space. He urged the Task Force to look at ways to minimize the use of asphalt and keep more green space as this area is part of the gateway to Concord. There was brief discussion on variations.

Chairperson Carley noted he agrees with the comments made thus far but asked have we thought about what a library is and the role of the library in the community. Pat Immen noted the library is a center of the community that brings people together and exchange information.

Ms. Immen continued that the Task Force was not charged with the task of designing the new Library and that the purpose of the renderings was to show potential size and massing on the Storrs Street site. She added that the Task Force is just looking for input and she noted the Library would like to expand its services to teens including children and adult programs. One of the major complaints is that people can't browse the whole inventory.

Bill Norton inquired what will happen to the existing building and Matt Walsh responded that, at this time, the city is not sure but he suspects the building will likely be retained by the City in order to provide flexibility with respect to addressing increasing space need issues for the Police Department, City Hall, and the City Hall Annex. Jan McClure also suggested moving Human Services back downtown from Pleasant Street.

Some members noted the Library is for people who can't afford to go anywhere else; it's a place to sit, it's warm and has restrooms so all of these things are important. Some brief discussion followed and Pat Immen noted circulation was down this year but up the past few years. However, significant reduction to the Library's hours is likely a key factor in this trend.

It was suggested that one talking point would be useable space vs. gross space.

Tim Bernier commented the location is good where the current library is; it's near the State Library, County offices, etc. and he would rather see downtown parking spaces used for downtown businesses.

Chairperson Carley commented that the library needs a ceremonial aspect to it; something good that makes you feel good about it; a public building should contribute to the moral of the community; a sense of pride to the community rather than just a meeting space.

Mark Coen inquired how the Task Force could best address those comments without getting into a specific site design. A discussion ensued on the advantages and disadvantages of presenting very conceptual designs to the public given that such concepts tend to change dramatically during the design development process. It was reiterated that the Task Force was not charged with designing a new facility. Other members of EDAC noted that having a design will be critical during the fundraising process.

Claudia Walker informed EDAC that she does not like the Storrs Street location but she likes the library being downtown. She noted this site is too valuable for future private development. She continued that we want to build something for the young people but we are building something in the area that, again, will shut downtown at 5:00 P.M. or 8:00 P.M. Perhaps we could create a new model and add some small retail space on the main level.

Byron Champlin noted the downtown has the advantage but before we build the library we will be vulnerable until the Task Force can show that the space that is useable really is predicated on the future needs of the library. Chairperson Carley noted money cannot be raised without a prototype. This goes back to the question of what a library needs to be given ever changing technology and questions about the future of "paper" books. To do the fundraising people must see what's going to be put on the site. Architects need to be involved; do a real design not a conception.

Stephen Heavener asked if EDAC would be talking about the anticipated operating budget but Ms. McClure said that would not be a part of this presentation.

Byron Champlin suggested recasting the presentation and put some information up front from the Needs Assessment regarding anticipated programming focuses of the new Library.

Chairperson Carley noted that day-to-day activity in the current library would be helpful conceptually to those who do not have the input of the Task Force. Some members noted that Concord appears small because we put everything downtown

and suggested locating the new Library more on the outskirts of Downtown as this site has good potential for private sector development.

***(Maura Carroll, Doug Black, and Mark Coen left the meeting at 8:45 A.M.)***

Discussion on demolishing and rebuilding the current Library occurred. Matt Walsh explained that this concept was briefly entertained but ultimately rejected as it was felt the community would not tolerate the loss of the existing library due to its historic significance. He also noted that expansion of the Library at its current location would be challenging as several abutting historic structures would likely be taken and demolished.

Claudia Walker suggested coordinating with other non-profits like the Capitol Center for the Arts and Red River Theatre to see if they would have an interest in the new facility with respect to space and programming. Jan McClure responded that this had occurred and noted that Red River Theatre would like to have another screening room.

Jan McClure thanked EDAC for their time. All agreed that planning a new library will be a complex and time consuming undertaking. Ms. McClure explained that if the City Council can reach consensus about acquiring a site while the real estate market is depressed, the City will save money thereby helping to reduce the cost of the project in the long-term.

### **III. EDAC REGULATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT - CONTINUED REVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

- Bill Norton briefly informed EDAC that 20/20 had solicited for facilitators to conduct three public sessions on the zoning ordinance. Five facilitators have been scored and interviews are being held next week. They will prepare a report to Planning Board and ultimately to the City Council.
- Chairperson Carley also noted that the Regulations Sub-committee will be reconvening on Friday, October 23rd, as a referral from City Council to EDAC has been made regarding electronic signs.

### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly A. Rafferty  
Administrative Assistant